CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 22 NOVEMBER 1991 FROM THE LEADER OF THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE OFFICIAL TEXT OF THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED FOLLOWING THE MEETING HELD IN LONDON ON 17 AND 18 OCTOBER 1991 BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIVE STATES PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL CONCERNING ARMS TRANSFERS AND NON-PROLIFERATION

I have the honour to send you herewith the official text of the communique issued following the meeting held in London on 17 and 18 October 1991 between representatives of the five States permanent members of the United Nations Security Council concerning arms transfers and non-proliferation.

I would be grateful if you would circulate this text as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament, and arrange for its translation into the other languages of the Conference.

(Signed): T.A.H. Solesby
Ambassador

MEETING OF THE FIVE ON ARMS TRANSFERS AND NON-PROLIFERATION:
LONDON 17/18 OCTOBER 1991

1. In accordance with their agreement in Paris on 8 and 9 July 1991, representatives of the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics met in London on 17 and 18 October to take forward their discussions on issues related to conventional arms transfers and to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

2. Recalling the statement which was issued in Paris on 9 July, they:

- agreed common guidelines for the export of conventional weapons (annexed). They expressed the hope that other arms exporting countries will adopt similar guidelines of restraint;

- agreed to inform each other about transfers to the region of the Middle East, as a matter of priority, of tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery, military aircraft and helicopters, naval vessels, and certain missile systems, without prejudice to existing commitments to other Governments;

- agreed to make arrangements to exchange information for the purpose of meaningful consultation, bearing in mind their shared concern to ensure the proper application of the agreed guidelines, and to continue discussions on how best to develop these arrangements on a global and regional basis in order to achieve this objective;

- welcomed work at the United Nations General Assembly on the early establishment of a United Nations register of conventional arms transfers, and supported the current consultations on this issue between a wide range of United Nations members in which they are actively participating. They called for universal support for this work;

- noted the threats to peace and stability posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons, missiles etc, and undertook to seek effective measures of non-proliferation and arms control in a fair, reasonable, comprehensive and balanced manner on a global as well as on a regional basis. They reaffirmed the importance of maintaining stringent and, so far as possible, harmonized guidelines for exports in this area. They embarked on a comparison of their national export controls on equipment related to weapons of mass destruction and agreed to examine the scope for further harmonization of those controls. They agreed to pursue discussions at their next meeting on these subjects;

- agreed to continue discussing the possibilities for lowering tension and arms levels, including the development of further measures and restraint concerning arms transfers and ways of encouraging regional and global efforts towards arms control and disarmament;

- agreed to continue to give these efforts high priority and meet again in the new year in the United States to take forward their discussions, and to meet regularly thereafter at least once a year.

GUIDELINES FOR CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS

The People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America,

recalling and reaffirming the principles which they stated as a result of their meeting in Paris on 8 and 9 July 1991,

mindful of the dangers to peace and stability posed by the transfer of conventional weapons beyond levels needed for defensive purposes,

reaffirming the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which implies that States have the right to acquire means of legitimate self-defence,

recalling that in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, United Nations Member States have undertaken to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources,

seeking to ensure that arms transferred are not used in violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter,

mindful of their special responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security,

reaffirming their commitment to seek effective measures to promote peace, security, stability and arms control on a global and regional basis in a fair, reasonable, comprehensive and balanced manner,

noting the importance of encouraging international commerce for peaceful purposes,

determined to adopt a serious, responsible and prudent attitude of restraint regarding arms transfers,

declare that, when considering under their national control procedures conventional arms transfers, they intend to observe rules of restraint, and to act in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. They will consider carefully whether proposed transfers will:

(a) promote the capabilities of the recipient to meet needs for legitimate self-defence;

(b) serve as an appropriate and proportionate response to the security and military threats confronting the recipient country;

(c) enhance the capability of the recipient to participate in regional or other collective arrangements or other measures consistent with the Charter of the United Nations or requested by the United Nations;

2. They will avoid transfers which would be likely to

(a) prolong or aggravate an existing armed conflict;

(b) increase tension in a region or contribute to regional instability;

(c) introduce destabilizing military capabilities in a region;

(d) contravene embargoes or other relevant internationally agreed restraints to which they are parties;

(e) be used other than for the legitimate defence and security needs of the recipient State;

(f) support or encourage international terrorism;

(g) be used to interfere with the internal affairs of sovereign States;

(h) seriously undermine the recipient State's economy.